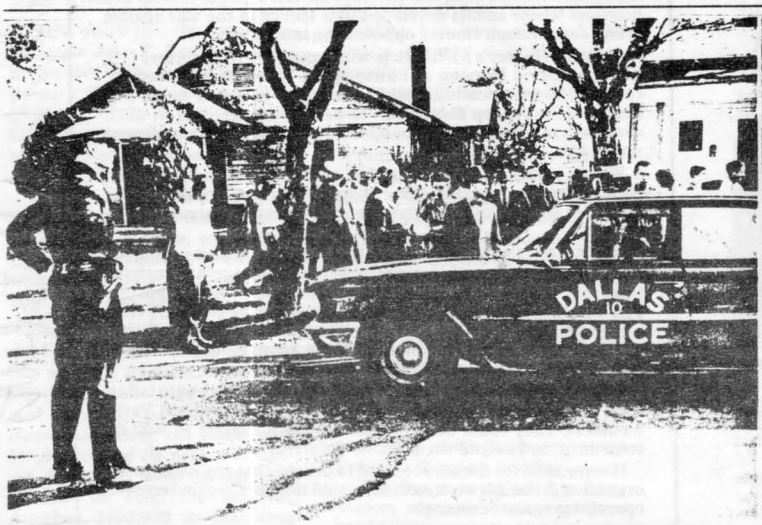
6, 13, 19, 20

COVERUPS!

Number 18 | Gary Mack, Editor & Publisher | September, 1984



Police Officer Tippit's squad car moments after he was slain. Blood stains can still be seen on the pavement near the feet of the investigating officer.

J. D. TIPPIT: THE "MISSING" BROADCASTS

By Gary Mack

You won't find them in any of the three transcripts accepted by the Warren Commission, but Dallas police officer J. D. Tippit made two radio broadcasts minutes before the Kennedy assassination. What they tell us about Tippit's work habits adds further suspicion to the authenticity of the "original" Dallas Police recordings and the events that led to his death.

Fifteen minutes prior to the assassination, Tippit, number 78, was patroling his regular district in Oak Cliff, a mostly residential area in southwest Dallas. Then, in a calm, matter-of-fact voice, he made this call on Channel 1 to the dispatcher:

78: Seventy-eight.
DISP: Seven eight.
78: Out of car at 4100 block of Bonnievoo, view.
DISP: 12:17.
And then:
78: Seventy-eight clear.
DISP: Seven eight clear, 12:20.

Nothing more was said, but his manner of talking certainly indicated only a routine situation. And that's what makes this little sliver of history so intriguing: Tippit notified the dispatcher of his actions in a matter so minor it didn't even carry a code number, yet more than half an hour after the assassination, with no clues to any suspect's whereabouts, Tippit supposedly stopped one without having contacted the dispatcher!

The pre-assassination broadcasts, as heard on both the "critics' tape" and the recent Ramsey Panel dub, reveal an easy going, conscientious officer; it's a description fully consistent with those by his friends and fellow officers (CE1976, 2985, 2986).

In other words, his failure to notify headquarters about a suspect seems quite unusual. Someone on the Warren Commission thought so, too.

By letter dated July 24, 1964, the Commission asked the FBI to interview Dallas Police Chief Jesse Curry about several circumstances, including those in which an officer was required to radio headquarters (CE2583).

> On July 28, 1964, JESSE E. CURRY, Chief of Police, Dallas Police Department, Dallas, Texas, advised there is no requirement or regulation of the Dallas Police Department that any police officer notify headquarters when such officer is stopping to question a suspect. He stated that if the officer is going to be away from his radio, he is required to check out with the radio dispatcher at the Dallas Police Department. He also stated that if an officer is alone and is stopping an automobile to question the occupant or occupants, the officer is required to contact the radio dispatcher at the Dallas Police Department and give the model, the license number and the location of the automobile stopped. He stated Officer J. D. TIPPIT did not violate radio procedure in not notifying the radio dispatcher at the Dallas Police Department that he was stopping the then suspect LEE HARVEY OSWALD to question him.

That FBI report, which does not identify the agents involved and is unsigned, does nothing to explain why Tippit did not radio the dispatcher before stopping the alleged suspect, Oswald. Tippit's long-time friend and supervisor, Dallas Police Sergeant C. B. Owens, knew "...from experience that Officer Tippit was the type of a policeman who quickly checked persons who aroused his suspicions (CE2987)." Also in this FBI report, Owens added that he believed "...Tippit stopped Oswald to check him because of the similarity in description broadcast by the police."

A suspect in the Kennedy assassination and still Tippit didn't call the dispatcher? That just can't have been true. If he did, the message has been deleted from what are supposedly the original recordings.

CE1974, the transcript made by the FBI and the more complete of the three, indicates that shortly after 1:11 pm Dictabelt 6 ended and number 7 began. A few minutes later a citizen, later determined to be T. F. Bowley, radioed in that an officer had been shot. While it's only speculation at this point, I wouldn't be surprised to learn that Tippit did contact the dispatcher and what he had to say did not fit with either Oswald or any other single gunman.

Suppose Tippit knew the person he was stopping, or what if there were actually two suspects (as ignored witness Acquilla Clemons maintained). Here's how the coverup could have

been done.

Within days, if not hours, of Kennedy's death, the original recordings were borrowed by either the Secret Service or the FBI. To avoid suspicion on the local level, agents took them to an out-of-state recording studio where the low quality audio was dubbed from the disks to high fidelity tape.

After identifying broadcasts not consistent with a lone gunman and cop killer, those remarks were edited out. Then new "original" disks were made from the altered tape, and they were what was later returned to the Dallas Police. Who would know or even suspect such a possibility?

But there is a telltale flaw: the 60 cycle hum tone. Dr. James Barger, the chief acoustic scientist for the HSCA, found two different hum tones not long after the Committee ended and before the Ramsey Panel completed it's work. Two tones can only result from copying, a fact which Barger reported to the Panel.

He was ignored and so was his evidence of substitution.

In it's final report, however, the Panel listed 13 recommendations for further study and the first was the hum tone issue! As part of Appendix F the Panel wrote: "The original Dictabelt could be studied more extensively for possible evidence...of being a copy...Further studies could include a careful search...for a second hum...which would characterize a copy."

The Ramsey Panel was aware of this significant discrepancy and chose to ignore it. That decision, a deliberate perversion of it's mandate from the National Academy of Science, is a disgrace and should be investigated.

As I and others have written before, there is strong evidence of substitution with the police recordings. Even then-Sergeant J. C. Bowles, who was a supervisor in the radio room and who prepared the second transcript for the Warren Commission, told me two years ago that agents borrowed those recordings a few days after the assassination and took them to a recording studio in Oklahoma.

The coverup continues.

FWST 8-20-84

Former FBI official rakes Hoover over coals in book

New York Daily News

WASHINGTON — Former Assistant FBI Director Neil Welch, head of the bureau's most publicized undercover operation, Abscam, has written a book that portrays the late J. Edgar Hoover as a martinet whose agents developed new tactics in the war against crime even though Hoover opposed the innovations.

In *Inside Hoover's FBI*, Welch, with assistance from former U.S. Attorney David Marston of Philadelphia, rakes Hoover over the coals in the most scathing public assault on him ever by an FBI insider. Hoover, top G-Man for 48 years until he died in 1972, continues to be treated with public awe by the officials who served under him.

Welch, who ended his 30-year FBI career in 1980 as head of the New York office, provides these glimpses into how Hoover ran the bureau in his later years and how the field agents circumvented his wishes:

HOOVER'S INTERNAL SECURITY probes against purported communists "were vastly more effective in chilling political convictions than supporting criminal ones." Welch said when he headed FBI offices in Buffalo, Detroit and Philadelphia he routinely reassigned agents who had been doing internal security work to other jobs and refused to allow them to write anonymous poison pen letters against civil rights groups to newspapers.

Welch said as a new agent in New Haven he was assigned to tail an elderly couple suspected of being "dangerous Communist Party members. They could barely walk. I thought I might as well do something, so I helped them across the street."

Hoover, who for decades refused to believe that any nationwide organized crime network existed, would not approve undercover operations against criminals.

BUT WELCH SECRETLY set up an undercover operation in Buffalo in the 1960s to battle the potent Maggadino crime family. Undercover FBI agents, dressed like mobsters, drove flashy cars at a time when the rest of the FBI still wore short haircuts and white shirts and drove only government sedans.

Agents regularly cooked up statistics to satisfy Hoover's insatiable hunger for ever increasing arrest figures.

In New York in the 1950s, Welch said it was "standard practice for agents with sagging arrest statistics to attend arraignments at night felony court. After the charges were read, if there was any conceivable federal connection, the agent would rise and advise the court that the FBI wished to assert jurisdiction over the offender."

In 1956, an agent in Miami nabbed a mysterious character who was following him around town. The agent discovered he was actually Hoover's own personal informant sent from Washington on spying missions against FBI field agents.

DTH 9-24-84

Book: Hughes tried to buy power

Author contends billionaire wanted control of White House

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Secret memos purportedly handwritten by Howard Hughes disclose an attempt to buy control of the White House by paying off leading politicians of both parties, a new book on the late billionaire says.

In his book, "Citizen Hughes," to be published in December by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Michael Drosnin also contends that former President Richard Nixon instigated the 1972 Watergate break-in at the Democratic National Headquarters to cover his connection to Hughes while unmasking a similar relationship between Hughes and Lawrence O'Brien, then chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

Excerpts from the book will appear in the November and December issues of Playboy magazine.

Spokesmen for the Hughes estate could not be reached for comment Sunday. But Perry Lieber, who knew Hughes and is now a consultant with the Summa Corp., the Nevada arm of the Hughes organization, said by telephone Sunday he "can't imagine" the recluse trying to buy his way into the White House.

O'Brien and a spokesman for Nixon also could not be reached for comment Sunday.

Drosnin, a former reporter for The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal, said O'Brien agreed to become Hughes' chief lobbyist in July 1968 and began collecting $15,000 a month from Hughes a year later. Drosnin said Nixon knew this, and ordered aide H.R. Haldeman to obtain proof. That set in motion a covert campaign that led to the 1972 bugging attempt at Democratic headquarters, the author said.

Drosnin said Nixon's motivation was that O'Brien knew of at least $100,000 in secret Hughes donations funneled to the President.

Drosnin also said Nixon grew increasingly fearful that O'Brien would disclose the contributions during the 1972 campaign.

Drosnin's findings were based largely on almost 10,000 memos handwritten by Hughes, according to a news release by Playboy. Drosnin said the memos were stolen from Hughes in 1974, and he later obtained them during his investigation of the burglary.

Howard Hughes in 1955

Playboy said the documents have been authenticated by handwriting experts Ordway Hilton and John Harris.

Drosnin said the memos reflect Hughes' desire for political power.

After Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1968, Drosnin said, Hughes wrote a memo to his chief of staff, Robert Maheu, telling him to hire the Kennedy's staff.

"I hate to be quick on the draw, but I see here an opportunity that may not happen again in a lifetime," the memo said. "I don't aspire to be president, but I do want political strength."

In another memo, Drosnin quotes Hughes as saying, "I am determined to elect a president of our choosing this year, and one who will be deeply indebted, and who will recognize his indebtedness."

Drosnin said that, although he didn't employ the entire staff, Maheu did hire O'Brien through his O'Brien Associates.

Maheu also could not be reached for comment Sunday.

When Nixon was nominated in 1968, "Even before Maheu could get to Nixon, Nixon reached out to Hughes," Drosnin said, thus initiating Hughes' contributions to him.

DTH 8-19-84

Kennedy museum still stuck in planning stage

By JEFF BROWN
Staff Writer

Eight years ago, the idea of installing a John F. Kennedy museum in the Texas School Book Depository Building was merely a glimmer in the eyes of Dallas County commissioners and the county's historical society.

Today it's little more than that.

Lee Harvey Oswald's sniper's perch on the sixth floor remains an empty gray space, sealed from the public and accessible to special visitors only by a rickety staircase kept under lock and key.

Plagued by the illness of its chief fund-raiser, Dallas' distraction with the Republican National Convention and other election-year priorities, the Dallas County Historical Society has raised only $10,000 toward its goal of collecting $3 million from private contributors to fund the museum. Another $100,000 in matching funds has been pledged.

Lindalyn Adams, president of the Dallas County Historical Foundation, said last week that the museum opening, planned a year ago for late 1985, now will occur no sooner than late 1986 — 23 years after the Kennedy assassination and almost a decade after the county government acquired the book depository from a private owner for $400,000.

"We're at a standstill," Mrs. Adams said. "It's slow. . . . Dallas has got its mind on other things right now, and we have not pushed it too terribly hard. . . ."

Mrs. Adams said fund raising has been hampered by her ill health and the decision of the acting director of the historical society, Conover Hunt-Jones, to move to Virginia.

She also said many potential contributors to the museum fund have been asked to give money to the $4 million Republican National Convention fund and to this year's political campaigns.

"I've been working on this since 1977, when the county first decided to purchase the building," she said. "So it's been a long, slow process. But I think that's probably in the nature of something like this. We wanted to approach it in the finest way possible."

The county bought the building from local businessman D.H. Byrd, using $400,000 from county bond sales. C. Judson Shook Jr., then the Public Works Department director, h· promoted the purchase as a wav of preventing the building from deteriorating or being turned into "something horrible, like a wax museum," said Dallas County Historical Society Chairwoman Shirley Caldwell.

The building at 401 Elm St. is at the edge of the county's downtown government complex. The facade, built in 1901, has been refurbished, and a huge Hertz sign was removed from the roof. The building has been renamed the Dallas County Administration Building.

The first floor has been turned into county office space and the Commissioners Court chamber. Commissioners and other county officials have offices on the second floor. The remaining five floors remain empty warehouse space.

In May 1982, commissioners appropriated $66,000 to plan a Kennedy exhibit on the sixth floor, and the historical society unveiled the plans in April 1983. The fund-raising board was appointed last September.

Plans call for constructing a separate, six-story building to house elevators that will take visitors to a sixth-floor walkway linked to the main building.

The design is intended to keep visitors separate from employees working in county offices on the remaining six floors. Although the county currently uses only the first two floors of the building, it plans to gradually move offices into the remaining floors.

A county bond program to be presented to voters late this year will include money to bring utility service to the upper floors. Employees will use an internal elevator to get to all floors other than the sixth.

Exhibit plans call for the sixth-floor window from which Oswald fired shots to be left as it was Nov. 22, 1963. Two theaters are to be built, one to show a film on how the world reacted to the assassination, the second to show reaction across the United States.

Other exhibits will describe the official investigations of the assassination.

About 150,000 visitors a year are expected.

"Historical things like this move very slowly," Mrs. Caldwell said. "And we have been very cautious and careful in our planning of the exhibit. Of course, the county didn't buy the building until 1977. Ford's Theater (where Abraham Lincoln was assassinated) took 150 years."

During the Republican convention, Mrs. Caldwell, Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Hunt-Jones will be on hand in the building's lobby to answer questions about the planned exhibit. Only the press will be admitted to the sixth floor.

FWST 8-18-84

Kennedys injured

Sen. **Edward M. Kennedy**, D-Mass., and his youngest son, **Patrick**, suffered cuts and bruises Friday after his car was hit head on by pickup truck near their Cape Cod home, authorities said.

KENNEDY

Kennedy, 51, and Patrick, 17, were treated for cuts and bruises at Cape Cod Hospital, said **Ed Martin**, a spokesman in Kennedy's Boston office. Another passenger in the car, **Thomas Gargan**, 13, apparently was not injured, Martin said.

The senator was later released, but Patrick, who suffered a gash in his forehead, was kept overnight for observation, said **Kathleen Anderson**, a spokeswoman for the family.

Kennedy's car collided with a pickup driven by **Leonard J. Bell**, 63, a plumber from Hyannis, Mass., who also was taken to Cape Cod Hospital, Martin said. He was treated for facial cutsand bruises, said Hyannis police Sgt. **Frank J. McKenna**. Anderson indicated that he was released from the hospital later Friday.

McKenna said police issued a citation against Bell for driving to endanger.

Kennedy was taking the boys to the Bank of New England in Hyannis to see a gold coin collection salvaged from a shipwreck.

DTH 8-24-84

One from the heart

Every day for the last week, **Bob Keefe**, 68, has left his Highland Park home and come to Dealey Plaza. His errand is one that seems to summarize the city's wavering reaction to all the recent attention, a peculiarly Dallas cross between geniality and a barely understood embarassment that won't go away. Keefe waits for visitors to begin their morbid tour and offers to take their picture with their camera in front of the school book depository or the grassy knoll. His offer is usually accepted.

"It's plain vanilla," he says, by way of explanation. "It's a courtesy I'm doing to say thanks for coming to Dallas."

— By David Firestone

Tuesday, September 18, 1984

JACK ANDERSON

The Washington Merry-go-round

UNSEEING JUSTICE: The Justice Department has tried to discredit a persistent adversary by claiming that he had been "closely observed" misbehaving in federal court for over five years, when in fact he had been seriously ill at home throughout the period except for one brief court appearance.

Justice's target is Harold Weisberg, 71, who has been trying to extract information from Justice about the 1963 assassination of President John Kennedy.

In an appeal brief, Justice Department attorneys managed to malign Weisberg's lawyer, James Lesar, as well, writing: "The district court had closely observed plaintiff's counsel's relations with plaintiff in this litigation for more than five years."

The brief blistered Lesar for allegedly letting his client get out of control. Actually, in his one appearance, in 1980, Weisberg sat in the audience, not at counsel's table.

Weisberg has been virtually confined to his home with a variety of circulatory ailments since September 1980. Yet the Justice brief claims the trial judge "saw" Weisberg making "interminable demands" for information.

Ear

By Diana McLellan

DTN 9-16-84

Q: Oh, dear. Speaking of Johns, I heard the other day that **John Hinckley**, the would-be assassin of **President Reagan**, is some sort of cousin to **Diana**, Princess of Wales. Doesn't he have some high-toned relations closer to home?

A: In fact, says **John Earl Kendal**, our ace genealogist, **George Bush** is John Hinckley's ninth cousin once removed. (Though the Veep is older, there are more generations between him and their mutual ancestor, Governor Thomas Hinckley of Connecticut, than between Hinckley and the Guv.) The families have been chummy; Hinckley's brother was originally scheduled to dine with the Veep's son on the very night of the Reagan shooting.

DTN 9-9-84

. . . Eight publishers began queuing up to snap up Leo Damore's Great Truth-About-Teddy-Kennedy-and-Chappaquiddick Book, originally expected from Random House this fall. (The 1,200-page manuscript was snatched back by Damore after a run-in with his editor, former *Washington Postie* **Peter Osnos**) . . .

DTH 9-16-84

Bridge for sale

EDGARTOWN, Mass. — Town officials want to sell the bridge on Chappaquiddick Island where Sen. Edward Kennedy was involved in the 1969 auto accident that killed Mary Jo Kopechne — if the buyer will cart the bridge away.

From Dallas to Watergate

By Jonathan Marshall

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS/NOVEMBER 20, 1983

Nov. 18, 1963. *The Secret Service cancels a planned presidential motorcade in Miami after it learns of a right-wing plot to shoot President John F. Kennedy "from an office building with a high-powered rifle." An extremist close to the plotters has predicted that a patsy will be set up "within hours afterwards . . . just to throw the public off."*

Nov. 22, 1963. *President Kennedy arrives in Dallas to shore up wavering political support in the South. Reacting to the tense political atmosphere, he turns to his wife and says, "You know, we're heading into nut country today."*

Across the Atlantic Ocean a top CIA officer is holding a clandestine rendezvous in Paris with a disloyal official—code-named AMLASH—of Fidel Castro's four-year-old regime. The CIA officer, misrepresenting himself as a personal emissary of Attorney General Robert Kennedy, claims that the White House plans to overthrow Castro. Then the CIA man hands AMLASH an innocent-looking pen that delivers a lethal poison, and promises to smuggle into Cuba a sniper rifle with a telescopic sight. The mission: assassinate Castro.

Even as they are talking, at 12:30 p.m. Dallas time, Kennedy waves to the crowds from his open limousine. Three or more shots ring out. The president dies almost instantly

THAT FALL DAY IN DALLAS CHANGED THE SHAPE OF American politics almost beyond recognition. Kennedy's murder struck down hopes for relaxing the Cold War, and installed a new president committed to militarizing foreign policy and winning in Vietnam. The assassination—and several more that followed—shattered smug assumptions about America's political stability. Long before Watergate, it led millions of citizens to question the credibility of leaders who allowed politics, not the truth, to guide their investigation of the case.

But behind closed doors, out of public view, the assassination had other effects no less profound. It launched the CIA and other covert forces—including powerful members of organized crime—into a prolonged cover-up of crimes that preceded Kennedy's presidency but might have caused his death, a cover-up that would warp American government for years to come.

The CIA hid from the Warren Commission and other investigators its dirtiest secret: how it teamed up with gangsters and hoodlums, without presidential sanction, to try to murder Fidel Castro. Had the commission, or the public, learned of the plots (initiated under tight-lipped commission member Allen Dulles, former director of the CIA), the whole course of the investigation might have changed. The CIA's own in-house prober of the Kennedy assassination, himself ignorant of the plots, later testified that knowledge of them would have been an "absolutely vital factor" in his inquiry.

Public revelation of the CIA conspiracy would have raised ugly questions: Was Lee Harvey Oswald, who had associated with anti-Castro operatives linked to the plots, a tool of rogue intelligence agents? Did Jack Ruby's own underworld associates bring him into the same conspiracy? In short, did the CIA unwittingly cause Kennedy's death?

The CIA could not know in 1963—and may still not know today—whether its murder plots against Castro caused the brutal slaying in Dallas. To this day, the agency withholds from the American people vital information relating to the case. What is clear in retrospect, however, is that people in high places went to great lengths to see that no one would ask the question. The cycle of cover-up and blackmail, only now dimly understood, would ultimately convulse American politics in a morass of intrigue culminating in our greatest national scandal: Watergate.

CASTRO

The CIA/Mafia plots against Castro brought together a coterie of conspirators—CIA officials, contract agents and mobsters—who would continue acting in concert to shape American politics and law enforcement through the Watergate era. In the center of the web was the shadowy figure of Robert Maheu, a private investigator who brokered between the establishment and the underworld.

Fidel Castro's revolutionary triumph in 1959 traumatized Washington. Not only did the bearded guerrilla proceed to seize enormous sums of American capital, but his victory seemed certain to embolden Marxists elsewhere in Latin America to challenge American power. For the Eisenhower administration—and for Kennedy—the lesson was clear: Castro had to go. Under White House direction, the CIA began planning an exile-led invasion of the island. But a handful of agency officials also began scheming to kill the Cuban leader outright.

As the American public learned only in 1975, after a Senate investigation, the CIA took its first steps to recruit Mafia killers in August 1960, before John Kennedy's election and without his knowledge. The agency hired as its go-between with the underworld one Robert Maheu, an exceptionally versatile former FBI agent, CIA contract employee and free-lance investigator. Maheu's Mafia friends included John Roselli, a handsome, expensively dressed hoodlum who represented the Chicago syndicate's interests in Las Vegas and Hollywood.

Roselli introduced the CIA to his own boss, Sam Giancana of Chicago, who in turn put the agency in touch with the crime chief of Tampa, Fla., Santos Trafficante. (It was all a matter of protocol, of going through the proper channels.) Trafficante, who controlled a small army of Cuban exiles, became the point man in the plots; it was he who would select the first crop of assassins and pass the poison along to them.

From the CIA's perspective, these gangsters had a lot going for them. They unquestionably had the know-how for a "wet job." And they were hot to avenge Castro's takeover of their fabulously lucrative gambling casinos.

But the Mafiosi who so patriotically volunteered their services exacted a price. Once covered by the mantle of "national security," they could no longer be touched. As early as 1961, the CIA had to call off an FBI probe of Maheu, who had illegally bugged a Las Vegas hotel room as a favor to Giancana, the Chicago godfather. The CIA told the stunned investigators that prosecution of Maheu would endanger a national security operation.

Told about the cover-up in 1962, Attorney General Robert Kennedy demanded an explanation. Two CIA briefing officers sketched for him the outlines of the plots—a year and a half after they had begun. He reacted with outrage. "If you have seen Mr. Kennedy's eyes get steely and his jaw set and his voice get low and precise," recalled one of the officials, "you get a definite feeling of unhappiness."

The CIA's reluctance to brief the Kennedy brothers about the plots was understandable. The plots got under way only after Bobby had named Giancana and Trafficante as public enemies in a book on corruption in the Teamsters Union. As chief counsel to the McClellan rackets committee, Bobby had grilled Giancana (who took the fifth) with questions like, "Would you tell us, if you have opposition from anybody, that you dispose of them by having them stuffed in a trunk? Is that what you do, Mr. Giancana?"

Beyond that, Maheu, the CIA-Mafia go-between, had helped Teamster boss Jimmy Hoffa fend off Bobby Kennedy's investigations of union racketeering in the 1950s. One highly reliable government informant even insists that the CIA recruited Hoffa himself to the kill-Castro project. By its choice of operatives, therefore, the CIA knew it was undermining the Kennedy brothers' commitment to smash organized crime.

"It would be very difficult to initiate any prosecution against Giancana," Bobby lamented after hearing about the plots, "as Giancana could immediately bring out the fact the U.S. Government had approached him to arrange for the assassination of Castro."

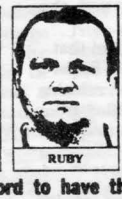
The attorney general took comfort in the thought that he had turned the plots off by his stern words to the CIA. Little did he know that behind his back—and contrary to their strict assurances—CIA officers kept the Mafia plots alive, without even informing the agency's new director. The CIA—relying on its own resources this time—also began activating AMLASH, the dissident Cuban official who would discuss killing Castro on the very day President Kennedy was murdered.

As historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. notes, "The CIA was reviving the assassination plots at the very time President Kennedy was considering the possibility of normalization of relations with Cuba—an extraordinary action. If it was not total incompetence—which in the case of the CIA cannot be excluded—it was a studied attempt to subvert national policy."

The CIA didn't brief President Kennedy about the plots, an official later testified, because it was "unnecessary" to inform the president of details. After Nov. 22, 1963, the CIA didn't tell the Warren Commission, either. One top agency official from that period explained that he and his colleagues "didn't think it was relevant, I would guess."

On the contrary, the information was all too relevant.

OSWALD



RUBY

What the agency didn't want the Warren Commissioners to know, what it couldn't afford to have them suspect, was that both Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby had ties to its anti-Castro conspiracy. If these ties were uncovered, the CIA must have asked itself, where would the investigation end?

After 20 years of scrutiny, Lee Harvey Oswald's life remains a riddle. He left behind a track of aliases, post office boxes and contradictory documentation that mark him as some kind of intelligence operative. In the final months of his life, that track split into multiple branches, as Oswald look-alikes apparently planted evidence that would incriminate him as a violent personality with leftist sympathies. But the real Oswald was always elsewhere, often maneuvering furtively with individuals on the periphery of the CIA's death squad.

• In the summer of 1963, Oswald seems to have been involved in a shadowy scheme to discredit the pro-Castro Fair Play for Cuba Committee, then a prime target of FBI and CIA harassment. His associates in this mission belonged to the Cuban Revolutionary Council, set up by future Watergate burglar Howard Hunt as a political arm of the free Cuba movement. By 1963 the CIA/Mafia funded CRC was controlled by the very Cuban exile leader recruited by Santos Trafficante to poison Castro.

• In August 1963, Oswald attempted to talk his way into an anti-Castro training camp outside New Orleans. A witness later alleged that an employee of Trafficante's closest Mafia ally took Oswald to the camp "to train with rifles." One of the camp's exile leaders turns out to have been a "lifelong friend" and confidant of the CIA's other hit man, AMLASH. In short, the camp brought the world of CIA plots to Oswald's door.

• Finally, one of the key figures in the training camp was Frank Sturgis, a soldier of fortune nabbed in 1972 as one of the Watergate burglars. In the fall of 1960, Sturgis claims, he plotted with Castro's mistress to poison the Cuban ruler. Chicago Mafia chief Sam Giancana himself may have backed Sturgis' plot.

As if Oswald's dangerous associations weren't enough, the CIA also had Jack Ruby to worry about.

The Warren Commission portrayed the man who shot Oswald as a slightly demented, strictly small-time Dallas bar owner. The reality couldn't have been more different. Ruby (the name had been shortened from Rubinstein) had grown up in Chicago, where as a youth he had run errands for Al Capone himself. In the late 1930s, he had played a key role in the violent rise to power of a crooked Chicago union boss who would become a leading Midwest ally of Jimmy Hoffa and a target of Bobby Kennedy's investigations.

Ruby had moved to Dallas in 1947 to help the Chicago mob muscle in on local rackets. Later FBI reports tagged him as the "chief payoff man" to the Dallas police department. In 1963, according to phone records, Ruby stayed in touch with mobsters and Teamster officials around the country.

Beset with reports that Oswald's killer was in fact a big-time hoodlum, the commission accepted the word of two notorious Chicago hit

men that Ruby was perfectly clean. A more objective look turns up Ruby's own connections to the CIA murder plots.

Those two hit men associates of Ruby, for example, happened to have been Havana casino partners of Santos Trafficante. According to FBI reports, Ruby himself had run guns to Cuba. In 1959, according to Congressional investigators, he most likely accompanied another mobster to visit Trafficante, whom Castro had temporarily imprisoned in the aftermath of the revolution.

After Kennedy's murder, the CIA must surely have worried, as Ruby himself did (according to a jail visitor), that "now they're going to find out about Cuba, they're going to find out about the guns, find out about New Orleans, find out about everything." But with the Warren Commission in charge (see box, opposite page), Ruby needn't have worried. Only years later did the House Select Committee on Assassinations suggest that Ruby (who died of cancer in 1967) wasn't lying when he told his prison psychiatrist that he knew "who had President Kennedy killed" and that he was "framed into killing Oswald."

TRAFFICANTE

Could the CIA/Mafia conspirators against Castro have turned against Kennedy? Certainly more than one had the motive, means and opportunity. Anti-Castro exiles and their CIA sponsors loathed Kennedy—and defied his orders—after he began cracking down on their sabotage raids against the island. And their mob associates had even more pressing reasons to want the Kennedys out of office.

Take Santos Trafficante, for example, a Mafia boss so powerful that he could kill with impunity rival bosses from other parts of the country. He had every reason to hate the Kennedys, both for their unrelenting prosecutions of organized crime and for their "vendetta" against his friend Jimmy Hoffa.

In September 1962, Trafficante met with a Cuban exile friend of AMLASH to discuss a $1 million loan from the Teamster pension fund. As the exile later recounted to investigators, Trafficante told him, "It is not right what they are doing to Hoffa. Mark my word, this man Kennedy is in trouble, and he will get what is coming to him." When asked how that could be, because Kennedy would likely win the next election, Trafficante replied, "You don't understand me. Kennedy's not going to make it to the election. He is going to be hit."

The story won powerful corroboration from John Roselli, Robert Maheu's original recruit to the CIA/Mafia plots. Roselli told Jack Anderson in 1976 that Kennedy's murderers were "Cubans from the old Trafficante organization" who "lined up an ex-Marine sharpshooter, Lee Harvey Oswald, who had been active in the pro-Castro movement."

As Anderson recounted Roselli's story, "Oswald may have shot Kennedy or may have acted as a decoy while others ambushed him from closer range. When Oswald was picked up, Roselli suggested, the underworld conspirators feared he would crack and disclose information that might lead to them. This almost certainly would have brought a massive crackdown on the Mafia in the United States. So Jack Ruby was ordered to eliminate Oswald, making it appear as an act of reprisal against the President's killer."

Shortly before his scheduled appearance before a Congressional committee investigating his role in the assassination plots, Roselli's tortured body turned up in a drum off the Florida coast. "Authorities believe it was a member of the Trafficante organization who was able to lure Mr. Roselli to his death," the *New York Times* reported.

MAHEU

ROSELLI

The CIA had left itself wide open to blackmail. If the story of the anti-Castro plots came out, it would hardly matter whether or not the agency's hired guns had actually killed Kennedy. People would think that they had—or, alternatively, that Castro had ordered JFK shot in retaliation for the plots. Either belief could destroy the agency—and the CIA's co-conspirators thought nothing of breaking silence if it would give them leverage against the U.S. government. Before long, they started turning the screws.

The blackmail efforts really took off in 1966, when Sam Giancana used CIA immunity through the Justice Department to kill a federal indictment. Robert Maheu likewise prevailed on the CIA to block a Congressional investigation of accusations that he engaged in illegal wiretapping. There is also considerable evidence, too complex to detail here, that Mafia allies of Jimmy Hoffa tried to use their knowledge of the Castro assassination plots to keep the Teamster boss from going to jail in 1967 on a jury-tampering conviction.

Meanwhile, John Roselli was having problems of his own. In May 1966, the FBI threatened to have him deported unless he informed on Mafia activities. Roselli turned to his former CIA contact, who in turn talked to the FBI. But his legal problems didn't end. Neither did the CIA's.

In March 1967, Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson published two explosive columns based on leaks from Roselli's attorney. According to their account, the Kennedys had tried to kill Castro, only to have the Cuban dictator retaliate on Nov. 22, 1963. For the time being, the allegations pointed more to the Kennedys than the CIA. But the truth was dangerously near the surface. And the blackmail was forcing the government's hand. As the FBI's liaison to the CIA observed bleakly, Roselli and Giancana had the CIA "over a barrel" and the FBI wouldn't be able to touch them as a result.

The columns caught the attention of President Johnson, who asked the CIA for a briefing. The next day, CIA director Richard Helms ordered his inspector general to prepare a report on agency-sponsored assassination plots.

The report—much of which remains highly classified—flatly labeled as "not true" the Anderson/Pearson claim that "Robert Kennedy may have approved (the) plot." But it did highlight the ongoing danger of further revelations, citing the two columns as evidence that none of the Mafiosi involved "would have compunctions about dragging in his CIA connections when he was being pushed by law enforcement agencies." That conclusion appeared under the ominous heading, *"Should we try to silence those who are talking or might later?"*

HUGHES

It was not only the CIA that was vulnerable to pressure from people like Maheu and Roselli. Richard Nixon, who won the presidency in 1968 on his second try, was threatened with the same embarrassing revelations of CIA/Mafia activities—revelations particularly sensi-

THE WARREN OMISSION

TWENTY YEARS OF DOCUMENTATION and testimony, backed up by the findings of two Congressional committees, have proven critics of the Warren Commission correct: The United States government lied to the American people when it rushed to blame John F. Kennedy's murder on one lone nut.

"The Warren Commission has collapsed like a house of cards," concluded Sen. Richard Schweiker, R-Pa., after his 1976 Congressional probe into the conduct of the official investigation. "I believe that the Warren Commission was set up at the time to feed pablum to the American people for reasons not yet known, and that one of the biggest cover-ups in the history of our country occurred at that time."

Only two days after the assassination, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover pressed the White House to have "something issued so we can convince the public that Oswald is the real assassin."

Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach fervently agreed. According to one FBI memo, "One of the dangers which Katzenbach sees is the possibility that the state hearing to be held in Texas may develop some pertinent information not now known. In an effort to minimize this, he is (trying to) restrict their hearing to the proposition of showing merely that Oswald killed the President."

Katzenbach's memos suggest he sacrificed the truth in the hope of saving the country from a worse fate: war. He wasn't dreaming. Dallas authorities were already blaming the assassination on an "international Communist conspiracy," and the nation was in no position to dispute them.

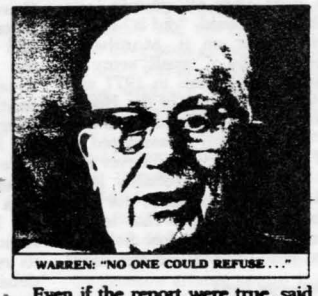
Certainly the dangers of a provocation were real. Well-placed U.S. intelligence officials were feeding the conspiracy mills with stories of Cuban or Soviet complicity in the assassination. On the day Kennedy was shot, for example, the 112th Army Intelligence Group in Texas cabled the U.S. Strike Command in Florida—then on "red alert" for a possible showdown with Cuba—with the false accusation that Oswald was a card-carrying Communist and defector to Cuba.

In suppressing any detailed investigation, the FBI soon had an unexpected ally: a presidential commission headed by Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren. Warren left his staff with no doubt as to their mission. "The president stated that rumors of the most exaggerated kind were circulating in this country and overseas," a staffer remembers Warren saying. Those rumors, "if not quenched, could conceivably lead the country into a war which would cost 40 million lives. No one could refuse to do something which might help prevent such a possibility." Lyndon Johnson had convinced Warren that "this was an occasion on which actual conditions had to override general principles."

Debunking the Oswald-Communist connection was the commission's easiest job. The theory that Oswald served as a Soviet or Cuban agent was inherently implausible; why would either government make an agent (much less an assassin) out of someone who made such a public display of his alleged left-wing sympathies? Not only did the assassination bring to power a more conservative president, but Cuban complicity, as Castro himself noted, "would have been the most perfect pretext for the United States to invade our country." Castro, on the contrary, placed his hopes in Kennedy, who secretly began pursuing better relations with Cuba in 1963.

The Warren Commission's harder task, really, was to rebut speculation that Oswald was, as his mother claimed after the assassination, "an intelligence agent of the U.S. government."

When the Texas attorney general's office informed the Warren Commission of reports that Oswald was an FBI informant, the commission's chief counsel called it a "dirty rumor" that "must be wiped out insofar as it is possible to do so by this commission."



WARREN: "NO ONE COULD REFUSE . . ."

Even if the report were true, said commission member Allen Dulles in a secret session, "I think Mr. Hoover would say certainly he didn't have anything to do with this fellow. . . . You can't prove what the facts are." Dulles, fired by President Kennedy as director of the CIA in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs invasion, admitted in the same breath that CIA officials would never acknowledge, even under oath, if Oswald had worked for the agency.

The House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded in 1978 that Oswald probably wasn't a government agent, a finding that other careful researchers dispute. At a minimum, however, the stench of cover-up remains strong. As the committee itself noted on finding that the army had destroyed its files on Oswald, "The question of Oswald's possible affiliation with military intelligence could not be resolved."

tive to the man who, as Eisenhower's vice president, had helped plan the Bay of Pigs invasion. In addition, Maheu and his allies held other damaging information about Nixon dating from Maheu's days with the Howard Hughes organization. Nixon tried to strike back against these threats—and Watergate was the result.

To see how Nixon succumbed to the pressure, let's take another look at Robert Maheu, the man who brought the CIA and the Mafia together.

By the mid-1960s, Maheu was firmly entrenched as chief of Nevada operations for Howard Hughes. The eccentric billionaire, as he came to be known, was investing incredible sums in Las Vegas, buying up casinos, hotels, immense tracts of land, and politicians.

Maheu's superb mob contacts ensured Hughes his pick of casino properties. But by 1968 the mogul wanted more. He wanted to own the President of the United States.

"I want you to go see Nixon as my special confidential emissary," Hughes told Maheu. "I feel there is a really valid possibility of a Republican victory this year . . . that could be realized under our sponsorship and supervision every inch of the way." Despite his boss's grandiose notions, Maheu couldn't buy the election—but he did contribute at least $50,000 to the Nixon campaign.

And the financial relationship didn't stop there. After the election, Nixon's friend Bebe Rebozo, the Florida banker, proposed that Hughes ante up some more cash. This time, $100,000 made its way into Rebozo's coffers.

Hughes seems to have gotten his money's worth. The federal government suddenly began relaxing its antitrust enforcement, and regulatory relief arrived from a variety of agencies.

The arrangement was too cozy for Rebozo's taste. When Hughes' attorney, Ed Morgan, volunteered to deliver some of the Hughes cash directly to Nixon, Rebozo demurred, on grounds that (as he later testified) "Ed Morgan represented Drew Pearson." Now there was something to worry about. In 1960, the columnist's revelation of the Hughes "loan" to Nixon's brother Donald had helped cost Richard the presidential election.

Rebozo must have wondered what Pearson's successor, Jack Anderson—who was also represented by attorney Morgan—might reveal this time around about the Hughes-Nixon relationship, especially with Morgan so close to the scene.

The situation stayed under control until November 1970, when—after a bitter factional struggle within the Hughes organization—representatives of Howard Hughes ordered the immediate firing of Robert Maheu and his allies. Overnight Maheu found himself locked out, Hughes thought, and would later charge, that Maheu had been robbing him blind.

Maheu was out in the cold—but far from defenseless. He took with him sheafs of memos incriminating all sorts of people in everything from illegal political payoffs to CIA covert operations. (Remember the Hughes *Glomar Explorer* episode?) He passed a great many of the memos on to Jack Anderson's longtime friend Hank Greenspun, publisher of the *Las Vegas Sun*. Maheu may have hoped to pressure the Hughes organization—through its political allies in the Nixon administration—to reinstate him, or at least to compensate him for his losses.

Anderson published two new columns on CIA assassination plots in January 1971, a month and a half after Maheu's firing, and during a fight by Roselli to block a deportation order. As before, Anderson suggested that the plots had unleashed forces culminating in the assassination of John Kennedy. As before, the attorney for Roselli, Maheu and Anderson—Ed Morgan—supplied vital information. Anderson's columns served warning that unless Maheu and Roselli got better treatment, the ax would fall.

Sure enough, the CIA asked Immigration to lay off Roselli to prevent "public disclosure of Roselli's past operational activity with CIA."

Watergate

For the White House, though, there was a special complication. Maheu knew about the Hughes payoffs to Nixon and might tell Jack Anderson. Worse yet, he might tell Larry O'Brien, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, whom Maheu had put on retainer to the Hughes organization as a Washington representative. The same day Anderson's first column appeared, the White House began investigating both Maheu and O'Brien.

An assistant to White House counsel John Dean, reacting to the Anderson columns, proposed examining Maheu's "covert activities . . . with the CIA in the early 1960s." But he also warned that any attempt to discredit Larry

> O'Brien "might well shake loose Republican skeletons from the closet."

Nixon didn't need to be told what those skeletons were. Besides the potential damage of revelations about the Hughes payoffs to Nixon in 1968 and 1969, there was a much bigger ghost to haunt him. Nixon had been White House liaison to the CIA when the Bay of Pigs invasion was planned, and more—when Robert Maheu signed on with the CIA to kill Castro. Nixon may or may not have known about the plots in 1960. But they were planned by men under his supervision—a fact he might not care to have revealed.

On Jan. 24, 1972, Anderson published a shocking account of the Hughes payoffs to Rebozo, citing "documentary evidence" he had seen. Rebozo assumed that Maheu was the source of the leaks. He later testified that Maheu "knew about it and he was having this problem with Hughes . . . and he was a friend of Morgan's . . . had him on retainer. I felt that is where it all came from."

A few days later, the *New York Times* reported that Anderson's friend Greenspun, the Las Vegas publisher, had wads of Maheu memos in his safe. The White House could put two and two together.

On Feb. 4, Attorney General John Mitchell gathered his "Plumbers Squad" around him and discussed plans for a political intelligence campaign. High on his list of targets: the Greenspun safe. The White House wanted those memos and would risk a burglary to get them. The Plumbers went west in April. They made an attempt to get into the safe, with help from a Hughes security officer, but apparently failed.

The Feb. 4 meeting with Mitchell produced another target: Maheu's friend and Democratic Party boss Larry O'Brien. On June 17, the Watergate burglars were caught red-handed, trying to bug O'Brien's office. Was that fateful break-in thus just a continuation of the effort to prevent Maheu's leaks from sinking Nixon's re-election chances? So concluded an unpublished staff report by the Senate Watergate Committee. To this day, no one has advanced a better explanation.

The break-in, of course, sealed Nixon's fate. The counterattack began three days after the capture of the burglars, when the Democratic National Committee filed suit against the Committee to Re-elect the President—and here the story comes full circle. The DNC's

WHO REALLY KILLED KENNEDY?

THE ULTIMATE IRONY WOULD SURELY BE IF the Warren Commission turns out to have been right after all—if one lone nut, Lee Harvey Oswald, "did it" on his own. Don't count on it. Months of detailed probing by a small army of investigators and scientists in 1977 and 1978 convinced members of the House Select Committee on Assassinations that Kennedy "was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy." Whoever did shoot the president is probably long dead, and those responsible for the crime aren't going to talk. That leaves the assassinologists with a free field for speculation: Who really killed Kennedy?

One lone nut—or two?

If you still believe in the nut theory of history, rush your resume to the *New York Times*. In January 1979, after reporting experts' conclusions that "Second Gunman Almost Certainly Shot at Kennedy," editors at the nation's newspaper of record still denied there was any conspiracy, preferring to envision "two maniacs instead of one." The *Washington Post*, not to be outdone, speculated that "as many as three or four social outcasts, with no ties to any one organization" just happened "in some spontaneous way" to develop "a common determination to express their alienation in the killing of President Kennedy." How comforting.

The Soviets

The closest anyone has seriously come to blaming the Soviet Union was Edward J. Epstein in his 1978 opus *Legend: The Secret Life of Lee Harvey Oswald*. Epstein wove together a lot of tantalizing clues to suggest that Oswald had been recruited as a KGB agent in the 1950s, and presumably continued to serve the Soviet spy agency until his death. But Epstein stopped short of alleging that the Soviets used Oswald to kill Kennedy; after all, what would they have gained? He can't quite explain, either, why the Soviets would employ as a secret agent a man who paraded his left-wing views on television and radio. The real value of the book lies in its revelations about the extraordinary debates and bureaucratic wars waged over these questions within the CIA.

The Cubans

This theory suffers from the same flaw—why choose Oswald?—but at least there is a motive: Castro perhaps sought revenge for all the plots against his own life. As we have seen, the "Cuban retaliation theory" first surfaced in the Drew Pearson/Jack Anderson columns. The House assassinations committee took it seriously but concluded that Castro would have changed nothing and risked everything—including an American invasion of his island—by murdering the president. All of Oswald's significant associations were with anti-Castro Cubans, not Marxists.

The Mob

"The mob did it," concluded Robert Blakey, chief counsel of the House assassinations committee. "It is a historical truth." Blakey's committee determined that the crime chiefs of New Orleans and Tampa, Carlos Marcello and Santos Trafficante, were the "most likely family bosses . . . to have participated in such a unilateral assassination." Both had the "motive, means and opportunity to have President Kennedy assassinated"; both hated the Kennedys for cracking down on their rackets; both issued death threats in front of credible witnesses; both had access to Oswald and Ruby. Blakey's case works backward from Jack Ruby, indisputably a mob figure, whose murder of Oswald can no longer be viewed as the impulsive act of an irrational man. (Ruby later admitted that his lawyer invented that legal defense.) Someone obviously made him an offer he couldn't refuse. OK, but where does that leave Oswald? The House committee never made a convincing case for Oswald as Mafia hit man. But decide for yourself: Read Blakey's own account (with Richard Billings), *The Plot to Kill the President* (1981) and David Scheim's encyclopedic *Contract on America: The Mafia Murders of John and Robert Kennedy* (1983).

The CIA, Army intelligence, the Secret Service . . .

At least one shot almost certainly came from the "grassy knoll" in front of Kennedy's motorcade. Police who ran up there in pursuit of the killer met suited "Secret Service" agents who showed their IDs. The only trouble was, the Secret Service hadn't stationed any of its agents there. Were they instead Army intelligence agents detailed to presidential security for the day? Were they the assassins spotted by eyewitnesses on the scene? Why did a local Army intelligence unit claim falsely on Nov. 22 that Oswald was a Cuban defector? We can only speculate, because the Army destroyed its files on Oswald—a fact the House assassinations committee called "extremely troublesome." Given their hatred of the Kennedys (bordering on "purple passion" in the case of the man who ran the CIA plots against Castro), their access to killers and their ability to cover up afterward, certain government agents must be considered suspects in the case. That's a lot different, however, from saying any of these agencies knew of or approved any plot to bump off the president. Anthony Summers' *Conspiracy* (1980), the best single work on the assassination, makes a convincing case for intelligence involvement.

Right-wingers

You've heard it before: Right-wing oil billionaires teamed up with the Minutemen and Southern racists to gun down the president. New Orleans D.A. Jim Garrison liked this theory. The latest twist came in 1977 when the CIA released a document concerning a French army deserter active in the fascist Secret Army Organization, which plotted numerous times to kill Charles de Gaulle. The man "had been expelled from the U.S. at Forth Worth or Dallas 18 hours after the assassination of President Kennedy" and indeed had been in Dallas on Nov. 22. The French government had wanted to know his whereabouts, so it could protect De Gaulle's life during his planned trip to Mexico. This report, even if innocuous, is a sobering reminder of how much goes on in the conspiratorial netherworld that we normally never even guess at.

attorney—Edward Bennett Williams—also represented Nixon's nemesis, the *Washington Post*. In addition, Williams had represented CIA assassination plotters Sam Giancana and Jimmy Hoffa; had been a longtime employer of Robert Maheu; and was the man who had introduced Maheu to John Roselli.

On Sept. 15, 1972, the President of the United States said of Williams: "I think we are going to fix the son-of-a-bitch . . . We've got to, because he's a bad man . . . He misbehaved very badly in the Hoffa case." But Nixon was the one who got fixed.

Richard Nixon tried to fight blackmail with blackmail. He borrowed directly from the tactics of his opponents, using the Watergate burglars' links to the still-secret Castro assassination plots to pressure the CIA into enforcing his cover-up. And he got away with it—for a while.

The Watergate burglars were no ordinary lot of ruffians. There was the suave E. Howard Hunt, Eastern sophisticate, bosom buddy of William F. Buckley and high-ranking CIA official. He had been in charge of political organizing for the Bay of Pigs invasion and was one of the first in the Agency to propose killing Castro.

Then there was Frank Sturgis, self-described Castro assassination plotter, CIA operative and soldier of fortune. James McCord had worked in the CIA's Office of Security, where the CIA-Mafia plots were hatched. Eugenio Martinez had run hundreds of sabotage missions into Cuba. Bernard Barker had served Hunt on the CIA's payroll until he was dropped in 1966 for dealing with "certain gambling and criminal elements," as CIA director Richard Helms later put it. And so on.

Consider then, within that context, President Nixon's astonishing strategy for enlisting the CIA in his cover-up. When the following White House conversation of June 23, 1972, finally became public, two years later, the "smoking gun" was at hand and Nixon had to resign. But in the short run, it served its purpose well:

"We protected (CIA director Richard) Helms from one hell of a lot of things. (Nixon said) . . . Of course, this Hunt, that will uncover a lot of things. You open that scab there's a hell of a lot of things . . . If it gets out that this is all involved, the Cuba thing, it would be a fiasco. It would make the CIA look bad, it's going to make Hunt look bad, and it is very likely to blow the whole Bay of Pigs thing which we think would be very unfortunate—both for CIA and for the country, at this time, and for American foreign policy . . . the problem is it tracks back to the Bay of Pigs."

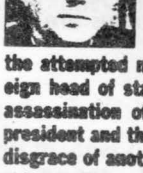
Nixon was ordering a political cover-up on national security grounds—using the most sensitive pressure he could devise to pull the CIA along with him. And it worked.

When H.R. Haldeman relayed Nixon's "Bay of Pigs" cover-up threat to Helms on June 23, the reaction of the CIA director was striking. "Turmoil in the room," Haldeman recalled, "Helms gripping the arms of his chair, leaning forward and shouting, 'The Bay of Pigs had nothing to do with this. I have no concern about the Bay of Pigs.' "

Yet the reference did the job. For the next two weeks, both Helms and his deputy, Gen. Vernon Walters, asked the FBI to "desist from expanding this investigation."

Just what was the "Bay of Pigs thing" that prompted the CIA cover-up? Nixon had been trying since 1971—without success—to force Helms to turn over to the White House a copy of the inspector general's report on the CIA assassination plots. (In his roman a clef, *The Company*, John Ehrlichman refers to this as the "Primula Report.") With the report in hand, Nixon would have had leverage against both the CIA and, he hoped, the Kennedy wing of the Democratic party. But Helms—whom Nixon fired in the fall of 1972—never would give it to him.

Haldeman himself offers the most intriguing explanation of Helms' discomfort. "When Nixon said, 'It's likely to blow the whole Bay of Pigs thing' he might have been reminding Helms, not so gently, of the cover-up of the CIA assassination attempts on . . . Fidel Castro—a CIA operation that may have triggered the Kennedy tragedy and which Helms desperately wanted to hide." That was the very hypothesis Anderson had planted in his columns of January 1971.



What are we to make of this web of intrigue running from the attempted murder of a foreign head of state through the assassination of one American president and the resignation in disgrace of another?

Twenty years after his death, we still don't know who killed John Kennedy (see box, page 16), although this Tuesday's anniversary is sure to produce renewed speculation on the subject. The "Castro retaliation theory," for one, will not die. Resurrected again in the mid-1970s by Jack Anderson, Hank Greenspun and the Rockefeller Commission on the CIA (on which Ronald Reagan sat), it still emerges from time to time in the press, usually trotted out by conservatives seeking to discredit the Cuban leader.

But in the absence of absolute proof, neither the retaliation theory nor its more sinister counterpart, the rogue-agent theory, any longer has the power to twist government agencies and warp public policy. The reason is simple: Though the mystery remains unsolved, the background of the case is now out in public view, and thus no longer useful as blackmail. American democracy didn't collapse from the official admission of CIA crimes, nor did national security suffer. Truth and openness served the country well.

The plots themselves, on the other hand, served the country badly, first by skewing government policy away from a political settlement with Castro and later by forcing the government into a series of humiliating lies. The CIA itself now admits they were a dreadful mistake. Yet they were a product of the kind of warped thinking that thrives in covert bureaucracies sheltered from public scrutiny and debate.

Secret government—where the claims of "national security" take precedence over common sense—breeds conspiracy and blackmail even as it withers democracy. Both the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the Watergate scandal epitomized government by deceit and manipulation. To the extent that those evils can now be curbed and contained, it is only because, for a few short years, the "post-Watergate mentality" opened a window on this dark quadrant of American politics.

But the nation is fast returning to business as usual. The unpublished records of the House Select Committee on Assassinations have been put under wraps for 50 years. More broadly, the Reagan administration is clamping down on the Freedom of Information Act, imposing stringent new classification standards, and gagging former government officials. With the renewed emphasis on "covert operations" abroad and domestic security at home, the potential for political crisis arises once again.

What we need to learn from John F. Kennedy's assassination is not who pulled the trigger, for that hardly matters anymore. Rather, it should be how covert institutions and policies make such a murder, and its subsequent cover-up, possible.

Until those institutions and policies are changed for good, American politics will not truly recover from the terrible deed of Nov. 22, 1963. ☒

JONATHAN MARSHALL is a Mercury News *editorial writer and the publisher of* Parapolitics/USA, *a newsletter for investigative reporters.*

A note on sources: This article did not depend on any "Deep Throat." Nearly all of the information here can be found—if you look hard enough—in published books or documents. What is new is the way the information is put together, and put in context.

Even the argument, though, is not wholly original. I am particularly indebted to Peter Dale Scott's masterful—if arcane—little book, *Crime and Coverup* (Westworks, 1977). Scott, a former Canadian diplomat and a professor at UC-Berkeley, is a recognized expert on the JFK assassination, Vietnam War and other aspects of recent American political history. Other important essays can be found in a collection he edited with two colleagues, Paul Hoch and Russell Stetler (from whom I have also learned much), *The Assassinations: Dallas and Beyond* (Random House, 1976).

The bulk of the material used for the article came from densely factual and rarely read government reports. The most essential of these were two studies published in the mid-'70s by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (the "Church committee"). Book V of its final report, *The Investigation of the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy: Performance of the Intelligence Agencies*, did more than expose how the FBI, the CIA and the White House sought to suppress the truth. It also explored at length the Castro retaliation hypothesis, discussed government blackmail by participants in the CIA/Mafia plots and aired new evidence linking Oswald (through the New Orleans training camps) to participants in those plots.

The earlier interim report on *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders* gave the public its first full discussion of the history of the CIA plots against Castro—including the Nov. 22, 1963, meeting in Paris between a top CIA official and AMLASH, the potential assassin. As is so often the case, this report relegated much of its most interesting information to the footnotes, including details of the subsequent blackmail efforts of the CIA/Mafia plotters.

The House Select Committee on Assassinations broadened our knowledge of Jack Ruby's links to the CIA/Mafia milieu with a 1,169-page study of organized crime and the assassination. Ruby's background was previously explored by Seth Kantor—a reporter for the *Detroit News* who had known Ruby in Dallas—in his biography, *Who Was Jack Ruby?* (Everest House, 1978).

The House assassinations committee also published separate staff studies on Cuban exile activities and the CIA plots against Castro. This latter report added important details to the history of post-assassination blackmail schemes. And it is here, buried in a footnote, that we learn that the CIA inspector general's 1967 report on the plots raised the sinister question, "Should we try to silence those who are talking or might later?" Sections of the inspector general's report released by the CIA appear in volume 4 of the House committee's hearing records. Most of the report remains classified.

On Jimmy Hoffa's role in the CIA/Mafia plots (and related matters), see Dan Moldea, *The Hoffa Wars* (Paddington Press, 1978).

The Watergate part of the article drew heavily from an unpublished study by the Senate Watergate Committee staff on the motivations for the break-in itself (a subject that remains highly controversial). Another important source was volume 21 of the Senate Watergate Committee's hearings (on the "Hughes-Rebozo Investigation, and Related Matters"), which includes the flurry of White House memos generated by Jack Anderson's 1971 revelations about Robert Maheu's role in the CIA/Mafia plots.

Additional valuable material on the White House came from H.R. Haldeman's *The Ends of Power* (Times Books, 1978). The definitive treatment of Howard Hughes is *Empire* (W.W. Norton, 1979), by two prize-winning reporters for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Donald Bartlett and James Steele. Also essential is Elaine Davenport's *The Hughes Papers* (Sphere Books, 1976).

Book depository fire damage put at $250,000

FWST 8-24-84

By GAYLE REAVES
Star-Telegram Writer

DALLAS — Damage from an intentionally set fire at the former Texas School Book Depository building, from which a sniper assassinated President John F. Kennedy in 1963, was estimated at $250,000 — mostly from smoke and water.

The structural beams in the seven-story building also suffered "deep burning," Dallas County Fire Marshal Jim Badgett said, "but I don't think it was severe enough to affect the stability of the building."

The red-brick structure is now the Dallas County Administration Building, housing the offices of the county commissioners and other officials. Four floors of the building are vacant; the sixth floor — from which, according to the Warren Commission, Lee Harvey Oswald fired the shots that killed Kennedy — is one of Dallas' most popular tourist attractions.

The materials used to start the five-alarm blaze early Thursday morning were stacks of pictures of the 1963 assassination, officials said.

An out-of-order sprinkler system, whose problems allowed the fire to spread, was repaired and functioning again by Thursday evening, Badgett said.

"We have confirmed it as arson," said Dallas Fire Department spokesman Bill Jernigan, because "there were multiple points of origin." He indicated that fires apparently were started in at least three places in the basement, where the Kennedy pictures and other memorabilia were stored.

The Associated Press reported that Capt. Lewis Eppes, with the arson division of the Dallas Fire Department, declined to speculate on a motive and said authorities "have no indication that it was related to the (Republican National) convention."

In letters to the news media and some public officials, a group called the AMERICAN Army has claimed reponsibility for 15 fires in the Fort Worth-Dallas area since January.

The letters have mentioned President Reagan by name, saying he would get "a warm reception in Dallas this August" unless he alters his policies in Central America.

The fire was discovered shortly before 3 a.m. Thursday by two reserve deputy sheriffs who were making the rounds of several county buildings.

More than 100 firefighters and 23 fire vehicles were called in, and the fire was extinguished about 5 a.m.

No evidence of forced entry had been found by Thursday evening, Badgett said, although he wants to talk further with the people who were first on the scene about exactly what they found.

He said laboratory tests to show whether flammable liquids were used to ignite the fire had not been completed.

Badgett said he had been told that the pictures that were damaged or destroyed were duplicates, neither irreplaceable nor extremely valuable. Most had been given to the local historical society by a museum, now closed, that had operated across the street.

"We were most worried about the Hertz Rent-A-Car sign" that once sat atop the building and was considered a Dallas landmark, Badgett said. "But it was not hurt at all."

Badgett said there was no evidence that the sprinkler system had been sabotaged. There are no suspects in the arson, he said.

"It was a very hot fire . . . because the area is hard to ventilate and the heat was just hanging in there," he said. "It was very hard to get in to extinguish it."

BRIEFS....The TSBD fire was easily the most exciting Dallas event during the Republican National Convention; within half an hour the Plaza was crawling with a couple hundred news and camera people, all waiting for the dramatic moment when flames would burst out of THE window. But the flames were confined to the basement, there was no forced entry (someone had a key, apparently) and no one has been arrested. Nearly 48 hours earlier, Dallas cosmetics millionaire Mary Kay Ash said, on the CBS Morning News, the TSBD should be torn down and the land turned into a parking lot; Dallas Cowboys head coach Tom Landry, sitting with her, agreed. It was just another black-bordered day in Big D....Another Dealey Plaza mystery man was tentatively identified by a retired FBI agent, but the man, also a retired FBI agent, denies it - this should be resolved very soon....The 1978 BBC tv documentary "What Do We Know Now That We Didn't Know Then" (which was produced by Tony Summers and included much research by Scott Malone and Mary Ferrell) is available in home video form as "The Killing of President Kennedy." Some material has been removed (the Zapruder and Nix films), but new footage has been added.... Some material for this issue was provided by Paul Hoch and Harold Weisberg; thanks to all who've sent clippings and made suggestions for future articles and areas of research - manuscripts are welcome as long as they contribute something new or different and are not libelous....The next issue may include the Moorman photos.

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FBI chief wants to tighten access to files

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — FBI Director William H. Webster urged a House subcommittee Thursday to tighten the Freedom of Information Act to make it harder for criminals to get the names of police informants from government files.

"Seemingly innocuous details in FBI records might provide the missing clue to identify a source or at least narrow down the candidates. A criminal does not require proof positive before taking action on such information," Webster said.

Webster and Deputy Attorney General Carol E. Dinkins told the government information subcommittee of the House Operations Committee that they support a Senate bill to tighten the rules under which government agencies must open their files to the public.

Currently the law allows the government to withhold information if it would identify a confidential source, but Webster told the panel that protection is not broad enough and urged that the law be changed to allow withholding of documents that might tend to identify an informant.

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